



The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner



January 16, 2007

Representative Anne-Marie Irwin, Chairman
Executive Departments and Administration Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 306
Concord, NH 03301

SUBJECT: HB 54, an act establishing a commission to study automobile recycling issues, including disposal fees.

Dear Chairman Irwin and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 54. This legislation seeks to establish a commission to study auto recycling issues, including whether a disposal fee is needed to assure end-of-life motor vehicles are dismantled and recycled properly without adversely impacting the environment. The Department of Environmental Services (Department) favors passage of this legislation because it will bring key stakeholders together to consider important questions about the adequacy of the state's existing regulatory system and industry infrastructure for annually recycling tens of thousands of wrecked and worn out motor vehicles in New Hampshire. The Department is concerned that the current system is failing and may actually be promoting contamination of our air, water, and land.

The motor vehicle recycling industry is the leading recycling industry in the United States. Nationwide, millions of motor vehicles reach the end of their useful service lives each year and are sent to motor vehicle salvage yards (MVSYS) to be dismantled for reuse of parts and recycling of scrap material. MVSYS typically recycle between 75% and 85% of the material content of end-of-life vehicles (ELVs), by weight. This contributes significantly toward conserving natural resources and reducing the demand for landfill space.

However, a poorly operated MVSYS can have a serious adverse impact on environmental quality. MVSYS handle many types of fluids, including gasoline, diesel fuel, motor oil and other oils, lubricants, brake fluids, anti-freeze, and solvents. Each has the potential to contaminate groundwater, surface water, and soils if not properly drained, contained, stored, and disposed of or recycled. In addition, car manufacturers put many other hazardous materials in motor vehicles, including mercury in light switches, ABS brake systems, and head lights; acutely toxic sodium azide in air bag cartridges; lead in wheel weights and lead acid batteries; and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in air conditioning systems. MVSYS are ultimately responsible for properly managing each of these



materials. The quality of their work is critical to protecting our environment, public health, and safety.

In New Hampshire, there are over 150 MVSYS handling tens of thousands of vehicles annually. Many of those facilities are marginally profitable "Mom and Pop" scale operations, where fewer than 200 vehicles are processed yearly on less than 2 acres of land with fewer than 2 employees. However, big and small, over 25% of the MVSYS in this state have caused groundwater contamination and a larger percentage have other environmental compliance issues to address.

Concerned by these numbers, the Department is actively working in cooperation with the Auto & Truck Recyclers Association of New Hampshire to improve environmental practices at both large and small MVSYS throughout the state. The program, referred to as the "N.H. Green Yards Program", was initiated in 2002 and serves as a model for the good work that can be accomplished when the Department partners with industry to solve environmental problems. The Department is proud of the progress being made to date. However, we also believe that continued progress requires us to take a closer look at whether the economics of motor vehicle recycling are a barrier to achieving voluntary environmental compliance and whether the resources for assuring compliance are adequate. In order to assure that New Hampshire has enough capacity to handle end-of-life vehicles at facilities that do not pollute our water, soil, and air, it is important to complete the type of study proposed by this legislation and move forward with the resultant study recommendations.

The Department encourages passage of HB 54 and looks forward to working with the study commission to complete this important work. If you have any questions regarding this letter of testimony, please do not hesitate to call me or Anthony P. Giunta, P.G. at 271-2905.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Burack". A large, semi-transparent red "COPY" stamp is overlaid diagonally across the signature.

Thomas Burack
Commissioner

cc: Anthony P. Giunta, P.G., Director, Waste Management Division
Pamela H. Sprague, P.E., Waste Management Division
Jeff Kantor, President, Auto & Truck Recyclers Association of NH